



May 4, 2011

California Medical Facility Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Project to Help the Blind

More than 30 community members, wardens and CDCR staff gathered at Vacaville's California Medical Facility (CMF) on Tuesday April 12, to celebrate the anniversary of one of the prison's longest-standing projects.

This year, the Volunteers of Vacaville Blind Project celebrated more than 50 years of partnership with CMF in the first program of its kind in California and one of the first in the nation.

This program employs inmates to build, clean and maintain Braille; label recycled eyeglasses for distribution; transcribe Braille; record audio books; and service and repair Perkins Braille Writers. Inmates read books aloud

including children's books, novels, and textbooks, which are then recorded to create audio books. These books are also transcribed into Braille for free or at a reduced cost.

CMF now has a full-fledged Braille production center. The Lions of Sight, which provides eyeglasses to individuals throughout the world at no cost, also employs inmates to provide eyeglass refurbishing services.

The project services more than 150 school districts, universities, non-profit groups, Braille corporations and private customers. In the last 18 months, Blind Project employees at CMF built 19 Braille for schools free of charge.



Nathan B. a new Blind Project worker, repairing a Perkins Braille Writer as part of his Repair Technicians training.

Avenal State Prison Donates 50 Cell Phones to Victims of Domestic Violence

In recognition of Victims Rights Week, on April 12, Avenal State Prison (ASP) donated 50 cell phones to the Marjaree Mason Center in Fresno. The Marjaree Mason Center was founded more than 30 years ago as a shelter and support services center for victims of domestic violence in the Fresno County area.

Avenal State Prison discovered the donated phones during illicit contraband searches on institutional grounds. ASP staff is proud that they have been able to turn these cell phones to provide victims of domestic violence with the chance to stay connected with loved ones or get help in times of need.

CDCR Employee Interviewed by KCRA for American Sikh Day

As part of American Sikh Day, a "Celebration of this Nation and Religious Freedom," marked in Sacramento on April 13, CDCR employee Balvinder (Val) Hansra and her



husband, Gurcharan, were interviewed for KCRA's "Common Ground" show at their home in the Sacramento area. After the tragic shooting of two Sikh men in Elk Grove, state officials, Sikhs and media have been working diligently to educate the public about Sikhs.

In her interview, Val

explained that Sikhs are "an integral part of the American society, who work hard and love this country."

Val's father's family immigrated to the United

States in 1906, and her uncle served in the U.S. Army in the 1920s. Sikhs believe all humans are the same, regardless of religion or gender, she said, and Sikhs, like people of other faiths, are "part of His beautiful creation." Of the estimated half-million Sikhs in the United States, about 200,000 live in California.